

## CHORLEY AND DISTRICT MASONIC GROUP

<b>Chairman:</b>	WBro JW Robson, PAGDC
<b>Vice-Chairman:</b>	WBro GP Snape, PPrJGW
<b>Secretary:</b>	WBro AF Hall, PPrGStwd
<b>Treasurer:</b>	WBro BW Sharples, PPrGSuptWks
<b>Regional Care Officer:</b>	WBro K Fletcher, PPrSGW (des)
<b>Local Care Officer:</b>	WBro A Farrington, PPrJGW
<b>Regional Charity Steward:</b>	WBro JD Ogden, PPrJGW
<b>Group Charity Steward:</b>	WBro M Warren, PPrGSuptWks
<b>Royal Arch Liaison Officer:</b>	WBro D Harrison, PPrJGW
<b>Group Mentor and Membership Officer:</b>	WBro GA Wiltshire, PPrGStwd
<b>Group Year Book Secretary:</b>	WBro NK Dunlop
<b>Group Webmaster:</b>	Bro I Simpson
<b>Group Social Committee Chairman:</b>	WBro DR Clough, PPrGSuptWks
<b>Group Publicity Officer:</b>	WBro JR Breakwell, PPrGStdB

### **Minutes of the Group Meeting held at Westhoughton Masonic Hall on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011.**

According to the signing-in sheets, all Craft Lodges with the exception of Greenhill (6260) and Blainscough (8532) were represented either by the Group Rep, the Lodge Secretary or a deputy.

According to the signing-in sheets, all Royal Arch Chapters with the exception of Chorley (6287) were represented either by the Group Rep, the Scribe E or a deputy.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.32p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular E Comp CDH Hamilton, PGStdB, Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals and all those who were attending for the first time.

#### **1. Apologies**

The Secretary reported that apologies had been received from:

WBro SR Martland, PAGDC, APrGM, WBro F Wilkinson, PSGD, PPrGM, WBro JH Morris, PAGDC, WBro Rev J Jermy, PAGChap, WBro TF Jackson, PAGDC, WBro I Higham, PAGDC, WBro DC Kavanagh, PrJGW, WBro GP Snape, PPrJGW, WBro RG Wilkinson, PPrJGW, WBro M Heather, WBro G Buckle, PPrSGD, WBro B Davenport, PPRAGDC, WBro J Currie, PPrJGW, WBro D Scoble, PPrSGD, WBro G Weston, PPrGSuptWks, WBro MP Baker, PPrSGD, WBro JK Cairns, PPrJGW, WBro RI Smith, PPrSGD, WBro NK Dunlop, WBro G Southworth, Bro D Parker.

#### **2. Minutes and matters arising**

The Minutes of the Group Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2010 having been circulated, were proposed as a true and correct record by WBro T Ford, seconded by WBro K Bowker; and passed by the Brethren.

#### **3. Correspondence**

Correspondence was read, which consisted of the following:

- Confirmation from the Provincial Office of the date of the Chorley Group Dinner in 2012.

#### **4. Election of Group Auditors**

The Group Chairman informed the meeting that WBro D Scoble, PPrSGD and WBro VH Norris, PPrGSuptWks had volunteered to act as Group Auditors for the ensuing year and that he had received no further nominations to date. The Chairman openly enquired in the meeting if there were any further nominations and there were none. WBro Scoble and WBro Norris were therefore declared as Group Auditors for the ensuing year.

## **5. Group Secretary**

The Group Secretary stated that in order to ensure that preferred dates for future Group Meetings could be booked more easily and in an effort to give Brethren and Companions as much notice of the dates of forthcoming meetings as possible, he had started to schedule and book Group Meetings at least one full year in advance.

To that end, the dates and venues of Group Meetings for the remainder of 2011 and for 2012 will be:

- Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at Chorley
- Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 at Westhoughton
- Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at Chorley

At the March 2012 meeting, the dates and venues for the 2013 Group Meetings will be announced.

He emphasised the importance that Group records are kept up to date with details of its members and asked all Secretaries and Scribes E to please complete the Change in Details Forms when appropriate and send it to him as soon as they become aware of a change in details of one of their Lodge or Chapter members.

In conclusion, the Group Secretary thanked everyone for their continued support and assistance.

## **6. Group Treasurer**

The Group Treasurer stated that financially, everything was running smoothly within the Group. He advised the meeting that his report would therefore be a short one and would focus on the following points:

- There were no Group levies outstanding.
- Payment had been received from almost all advertisers and individual page sponsors. Additionally, the Treasurer expressed his thanks to all those who had paid so promptly.
- Cheques received for advertisements or page sponsorship in the 2011/2012 Group Year Book will not be cashed at the Bank until July of this year. It is therefore perfectly acceptable for cheques to be post-dated to July, if required.

## **7. Reports from Masonic Halls**

### **i) Chorley Masonic Hall**

No report received

### **ii) Horwich Masonic Hall**

The Group Secretary delivered the following report, (*which is included here in its entirety*) on behalf of the Chairman of Horwich Masonic Hall, from whom apologies for absence had been received:

'Windows update:

All Phase 3 windows repaired and painted. Inspection needs to be carried out, but unfortunately I have been extremely busy. This leaves 4 First Floor windows (exclude FF17 behind Junior Warden as this was replaced some time ago and painted) and 2 Ground Floor Windows.

Total Quote - £2172.50, plus painting plus access tower (quote to be finalised).

Structural Report:

I have discussed with Stan the next steps and we are hoping to have a meeting in the next couple of weeks to discuss further. As discussed at the last meeting I was getting busy with work and I needed assistance to progress with this. As yet no offer to assist has been forthcoming so no real progress has been made.

Roof:

Further inspection due to be carried out at the end of the month.

Interior Decorating:

The area of ceiling and walls to the entrance area and wall to festive board room need decorating. They have been discoloured by water ingress. Head of reveal to one window opposite kitchen – paper fell down and had to be cut off. This needs replacing. I think this was due to the wall drying out and paper de-bonding from the plaster. The plaster was found to be solid and secure and was painted temporarily.'

### **iii) Westhoughton Masonic Hall**

No report received

At this point WBro K Fletcher, PPrSGW (des) informed the meeting that on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011 he would be retiring as Regional Care Officer and thanked the Brethren for the warmth of their welcome to successive Group Meetings over the years. The Group Chairman wished WBro Fletcher a long and happy retirement, to which the Brethren applauded spontaneously.

## **8. Activity reports**

For all activity reports, please refer to the document entitled '*Appendix - Activity Reports 25-03-11*', which accompanies these minutes.

Immediately after item 8b on the agenda, WBro JS Dutchman-Smith, Treasurer of the West Lancashire Freemasons' Charity, informed the meeting that the charity's third financial year would be coming to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. He stated that current grants payable to widows and Freemasons in distress were greater than donations being received. He emphasised that in order for the charity to continue to help those in need, continued support from Lodges, Chapters and individuals is vital.

## **9. Group Chairman's report**

Before commencing his report, the Group Chairman thanked all Representatives of Societies and Committees for their diligent and hard work throughout the Masonic season.

The Group Chairman delivered the following report:

### **i) Group Officers**

The Group Chairman and Vice Chairman had been reappointed for 2011-12 by the RW Provincial Grand Master. John Robson confirmed that with one exception all other Group Officers had also been reappointed and he thanked them all for their hard work and loyalty. The one exception concerned the office of Group Webmaster. Tony Marsden who had built the website and managed it to a high standard over several years had asked to be released from his duties due to ill health. The Group Chairman said that many would know that Tony lived and worked in Anguilla in the West Indies. He had originally moved to the island on a Police secondment but had since retired and had taken a position with a private security company. For the previous 12 months or more, Tony had not been feeling too well and, when he eventually had tests done, he was found to have leukaemia. He was in The Christie hospital undergoing chemotherapy. A bone marrow transplant will be required but to date no match had been found. John said he was sure that we all wished him well. In Tony's stead, the Group Chairman had appointed Iain Simpson of Chorley Lodge, who had made an excellent start in his new role.

### **ii) Meetings arranged by Group Officers**

The Chairman mentioned that he received recurring reports that meetings arranged by Group Officers were poorly attended. He asked Group Representatives to urge their Lodge Officers to attend these meetings whenever possible. In return he said that he had asked the Group Officers to call a meeting only when one was deemed essential to the smooth operation of the particular function.

### **iii) Response to requests for information from Group Officers**

Similarly, there was also difficulty in obtaining replies from Lodges and Chapters to requests for information from Group Officers. Most Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribes E were excellent

communicators but in some cases the responses were very slow to arrive and some never arrived. John Robson suggested that such requests were not made lightly and the information required was always for an important reason and he asked that every effort be made to speed up replies.

#### **iv) Sporting Societies**

John mentioned that he had written to all lodges and chapters, encouraging support for our sporting societies, which play an important part in the life of the Group in providing opportunities for recreational activities and bonding that often involves both freemasons and their families. That support is needed, not only in attending the events, but also in answering quickly and positively their requests for charitable donations, which had not been as readily forthcoming in the previous few years. He said he had heard mention that the donations given by lodges and chapters went towards the costs of those participating in the events, and he assured all present that this was not true. All donations are given to masonic and non masonic charities and good causes and everyone pays his own expenses, such as green fees, etc.

#### **v) Collections and Raffles and Accounting for Charitable Monies**

The Chairman mentioned the recent guidance for Treasurers and Charity Stewards provided by the Provincial Grand Secretary and our own Assistant Provincial Grand Master. He stressed the importance of following the guidelines to the letter and ensuring that when we ask for money in collections, raffles, Old England nights, or on any other fund raising occasion we must always announce in advance the purpose to which the money is to be put. It is perfectly legitimate to have a raffle for the masonic hall, the Almoner's fund, or any other purpose as long as those being asked to contribute are clear about the destination of their contributions.

#### **vi) Grand Rank**

The Group Chairman said that he was sure all present would like to congratulate those who serve the Group and were to receive appointments and promotions in Grand Rank, including:

Stanley Raymond Martland, Assistant Provincial Grand Master, who was to be promoted in Craft to PSGD, as befits his office,

David Harrison, Group Royal Arch Liaison Officer, who is to be appointed to Supreme Grand Chapter with the rank of PGStdB,

John Robson, Group Chairman, who is also to be appointed to Supreme Grand Chapter with the rank of PGStdB.

#### **vii) Provincial Grand Rank**

The Chairman mentioned that in the Craft in the current year there would be 17 first appointments to Provincial Grand rank, of which 2 would be to acting rank, and 15 promotions. There would have been 3 acting ranks, but one went to a brother from Standish Lodge, which had now left the Group. In the Royal Arch there would be 13 appointments involving Chorley Group brethren and companions, 4 of which were to acting rank, and 5 promotions. John particularly congratulated those Group Officers and Group Representatives, who had received preferment, including:

Keith Fletcher, Regional Care Officer, to be promoted in Craft to PPrSGW,

Tony Hall, Group Secretary, to be appointed in the Royal Arch to Provincial Grand Steward,

Malcolm Warren, Group Charity Steward, to be promoted in the Royal Arch to PPrGSN,

Mike Silver, Group Representative for Tyldesley Lodge, to be promoted in Craft to PPrDGSuptWks,

Ian Rothwell, Group Representative for Coronation Chapter, to be appointed in the Royal Arch to PPrGStdB,

Vic Norris, Group Representative for Astley and Ellesmere Lodge, to be appointed in the Royal Arch to PPrAGDC,

Stewart Rothwell, Group Representative for Westhoughton Chapter, to be promoted in the Royal Arch to PPrGSN.

Also present at the meeting was Alan Hurst, Assistant Secretary of Horwich Lodge, who is to be appointed in the Craft to the acting rank of PrAGStdB.

The meeting acknowledged with applause those who are to receive honours.

### **viii) Fraternal Visits**

The gavel that travels was currently with St James Lodge, having been claimed from St Westhoughton Lodge the previous evening. The gavel was still moving smartly around the Group but always seemed to end up with St James Lodge, who were the undisputed kings of visiting. On a couple of occasions recently there had been competition for the gavel with more than one lodge turning up to claim it and, whenever a lodge had visited for this purpose, there had been wonderful evenings.

### **ix) Membership**

So far this season there had been only 15 initiations in the Group, compared with 20 at the same stage in 2010 and 23 in 2009. Only 12 lodges out of 22 had initiated a candidate. In the Royal Arch there had been 8 exaltations, one more than at the same time the previous year but below the equivalent figure of 10 for 2009. After taking into account the loss of Standish Lodge, there were currently 690 Craft masons and 281 Royal Arch members in the Group. These figures did not allow for dual memberships but these were minimal. Both showed a small loss against the numbers the previous year. The average age of a Craft mason in the Group was 60 and the average age of a Royal Arch mason was 64. Membership of the Royal Arch by Craft masons in the Group had fallen from 40% to 38%.

### **x) Successful Lodge Survey**

In late 2010 the Provincial Grand Master had asked all Group Chairmen to carry out a survey to determine what attributes led to a lodge being successful. The Group Vice Chairman, Paul Snape, had spoken to a senior representative of each lodge in the Group and a report had been submitted to a recent meeting of the Group Chairmen with the Provincial Grand Master and his senior colleagues. From the 24 Groups in the Province, 21 different attributes had been mentioned. The top 7 by quite some distance had been:

1. Good ritual and shared work, resulting in enthusiasm to attend practices and after practice fellowship.
2. Quality social activity with lodge members, families and friends.
3. A proper policy for recruitment, retention and retrieval.
4. Committee meetings and discussion open to all lodge members, not just Past Masters and elected representatives of newer brethren.
5. Formal planning for the future of the lodge (5 year plan).
6. A good meeting place with attractive food at a reasonable price.
7. Leadership promoting good bonding and inclusiveness.

Chapters were not included in the survey but the same attributes would be considered equally important in the Royal Arch. The Group Chairman said he would do a more detailed report as soon as he had the time and send it to all lodges and chapters. He hoped that the results of the survey would provide a guide for us all to follow to ensure the future of freemasonry.

### **xi) Payment of Lodge or Chapter Subscriptions by Instalments**

The Provincial Grand Secretary had issued advice on the payment of subscriptions by instalments and this was another matter on which the Group Secretary would be writing to lodges and chapters. This method of payment is a growing practice within the Province. It helps to alleviate the problem of finding a large sum of money at one time and may be commended to lodges and chapters.

There are, however, some dangers of which to be aware. If instalments are being made during the masonic year for which the subscription is due, the brother or companion remains in arrears until the last instalment is made and he is fully paid up.

This could be a problem if he needs a clearance certificate before he pays the last instalment and the system could bring him into conflict with his lodge or chapter by-laws in connection with exclusion for non payment. Lodge and chapter Treasurers must also remember that Grand and Provincial dues are paid in arrear and arrange to have sufficient funds to meet these payments at the proper time.

This may be difficult if members are paying by instalments. The Provincial Grand Secretary had annual experience of lodges or chapters in difficulty financially because they could not meet this liability.

The system of payment by instalments does work very well, however, if the instalments paid in year 1 are for the subscription due in year 2. Any lodge or chapter wishing to set up a system of payment by instalments would be well advised to adopt this method of payment in advance, so that when the new masonic year starts members are already fully paid up.

#### **xii) Celebrations**

The Group Chairman emphasised the importance of 50 years and 60 years celebrations for those experienced and respected freemasons who were celebrating them and he called on all members to support the celebrants and our Assistant provincial Grand Master on these splendid occasions. Celebrations in the following few months included:

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|--------------------|---|
| 11th April 2011    | Bill Carr will celebrate 60 years as a freemason in Astley and Ellesmere Lodge. |
| 12th April 2011    | John (Jack) Robinson will celebrate 60 years in Horwich Lodge.                  |
| 11th October 2011  | Harold Land will celebrate 50 years in Brookfield Lodge.                        |
| 29th November 2011 | Stephen Ward will celebrate 50 years in Peace Lodge.                            |

#### **xiii) Group Masters and First Principals' Festival**

John Robson announced that this biennial event will be held on Friday 20th April 2012 at Chorley and that the principal guest would be the Deputy Provincial Grand Master designate, Michael Hedley Hill.

#### **xiv) Other Important Dates**

Provincial Grand Chapter would be held on 14th April 2011 and Provincial Grand Lodge on 23rd May 2011, both at Blackpool. The Chairman said there would be 2 opportunities in the near future for brethren to join the Provincial Grand Master in the Group and he urged support at Anderton Lodge on 18th April 2011 and at Lever Park Lodge on 3rd May 2011.

A workshop for Directors of Ceremonies and Assistant Directors of Ceremonies, and anyone else who may be interested, had been arranged for Wednesday 12th October at Westhoughton. Each lodge and chapter DC is to receive a personal invitation and will be asked to inform his ADC.

#### **10. Any other business**

WBro D Harrison, PPrJGW suggested to those Royal Arch Masons present that Chapters should consider inviting non-Royal Arch Masons to dine at their festive board.

WBro T Ford, Secretary of Asshaw Lodge No 6849 informed the meeting that his Lodge had appointed a 'Lodge Publicity Officer' who regularly supplied newsworthy information about his Lodge to the Group Publicity Officer.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.12p.m.

**Date of next meeting: Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Venue: Chorley Masonic Hall**